

memorytown u.s.a.



issue number one
\$1 $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 stamps or trade
summer 1998

Emily K. Larned
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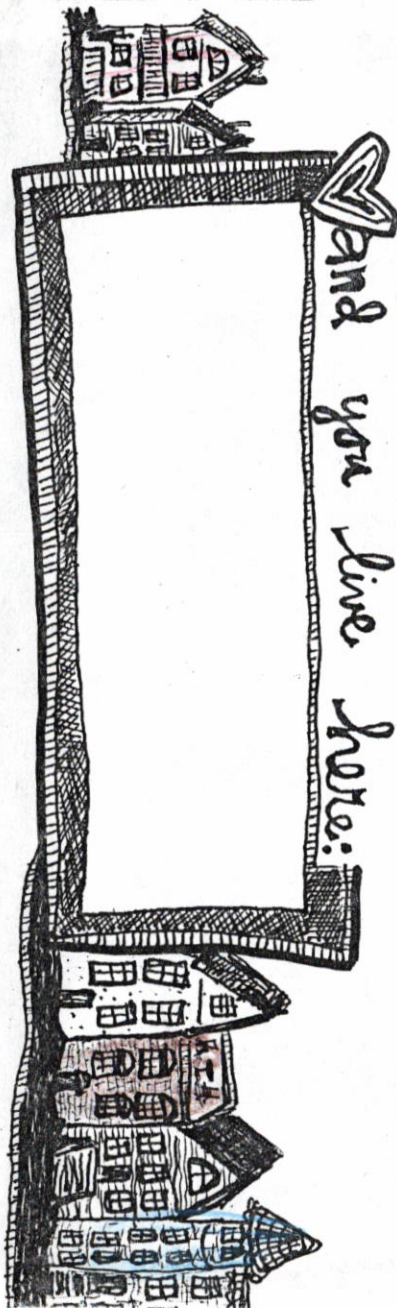
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thank you: carolee, sara & paul, abby,
molly IV, zabet, jon, sung, andrew,
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michael this city is empty without you

come home

~~NOTES ON THE LIFE~~

i want to tell you some things first before you leave. here in new york city it has rained every day, even for just a tiny bit, for the past week. it is approaching late june & i fill my days full any way i can because i have, still, an internship that doesn't exist: a long story not now worth repeating. but there is so much to do to make & to see that really i have been quite busy.

by the second week of august i will move back to connecticut as my friend masa has asked me to be art director & costumer for his thesis film "tag sale." i have no idea what i am doing, no, but i am excited, yes.

september first i move back to wesleyan, to the lovely tudor building apartments on pearl street with jenna and basil (he being *mon chat*) & i cannot tell you how excited i am. i cannot think of a better person to live with than jenna. also i will be a t.a. for pre-1860 american literature which should be bizarre after taking a year off from school; i have no idea what i am doing, no.

i have been spreading rumors that i am going to rome, italy in january and staying there through the summer. that is now untrue. for months it was true but now that i am back on the east coast i have realized the enormity of things i need to accomplish or finish or try at wesleyan in four semesters. i mean even in terms of classes let alone anything else and everything else and there are so many of those things really. two years straight in a place not new should be good for me i think. except of course i am fooling myself because wesleyan will be an entirely different place than it was before, with half the population completely changed since i was last there. i visited the night before graduation this past may, just one day after i got back from kansas, & the whole time i was on campus i felt like i was searching for something but i didn't know what it was. i still haven't found it.

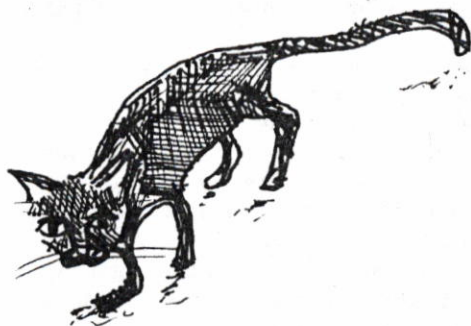
the end of may 1998:

i am at home now with my past, all of it, for just one week before i move into new york city for the summer. hardwood floors and extensive gardens outside and my parents, sweating in the sun until after dark, the lines in their hands smoothed with dirt. and here i am inside with books and books and abandoned art projects, pieces of dolls and fabric and unfinished paintings, suitcases of zines and my cat from kansas asleep on the bed in the other room.

these are things i left in kansas: i don't even know what. the fact is i have seen so much in the past three weeks that whenever i blink i watch a thousand movies in one image right after the other nonsensical and strange: an oversized tea cup of coffee in flagstaff dark dark casinos of slot machines and electronic \$1 poker games at every chair at every bar in las vegas and the red rock giant alien forms in utah and the lush green hills of california after the rain oh, all and everything, the flatness of ohio that could be kansas that could be part of california, the foliated familiarity of new jersey approaching home, the dingy family restaurant turned neighborhood dive bar in uptown minneapolis. the fact is still while i drove home when i hadn't reached here yet i would blink and see a thousand landscapes on the inside of my eyelids and open them, my eyes, and still be driving, still looking. two weeks ago at night when we'd sleep in the parked car by the railroad tracks my hip would hurt and it all and everything, everything i had seen this whole past year, would be on playback as inward bound trains blew me awake with whistle screams. in one state i kissed a boy who had been married and divorced; in another a barkeeper on his birthday bought stephanie and me a round of ~~cocktails~~ and after, when we went out into the dark deserted downtown like a ghost town at the

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foot of a mountain, a herd of deer crossed in front of us delicately gracefully as a black cat followed us to a dirt road: that was new mexico. this is all the truth. there is too much that is true to have room to make anything up.

but there's this: how can there be so many different planets within one country. how could i have seen so many things and be back in a place where i came from. how can you get to all of these places almost at once and then go back to any one place, and stay there, even just for a while.

two and a half years ago i found a tiny tiny yellow pitcher in a thrift shop in a small connecticut town two hours away and on this pitcher was the inscription memorytown usa. i turned to the boy next to me, a newer friend of a new friend, and i said something like this: how lovely, this. i mean memorytown usa could be anyone's town or everyone's town. i remembered this incident while driving in the colorado mountains and while i hadn't been planning on stopping my old zine muffin bones and starting a new one when i remembered this, well, i wanted to begin again. five years and nineteen issues is a lot of baggage to carry.

catalogue!

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actual size!

muffin bones
t-shirt

with the design to the left, "muffin bones" underneath. hand silkscreened and only a very few left! black ink on thrifted t-shirts. list your size/color preferences.

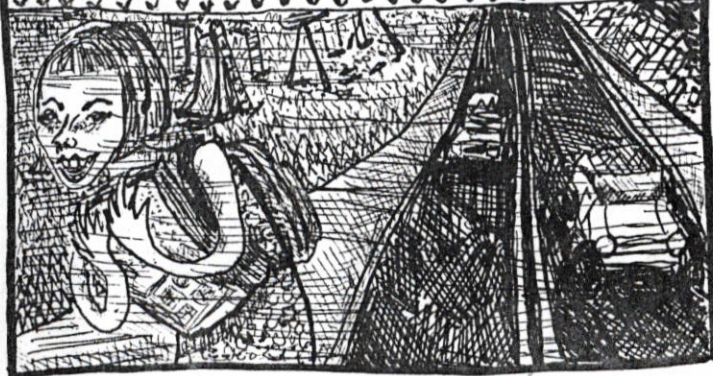
\$5 & 4 stamps
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good-bye
muffin
bones!

memory lane usa what would be nicer than a FIVE issue subscription for \$5? keep your stamps & save \$3.20! what a deal what a gift!

what do you do when you fall in love with a place you are about to leave.

walking bare armed bare legged through the darkness thick KANSAS evening breeze fresh photocopies pressed warm to my chest. high school kids dressed for prom mill around in front of the closed down movie theatre. walking away from downtown saturday night toward residential subURbia galaxie 500's "strange" playing on my walkman as i pass the deserted dark dark playground at the edge of the park. and it is like: does this moment even exist as real for other people as real as this right now. when i reach the 19th block by the glowing 24-hour supermarket right then it starts to rain, just delicate sporadic drops just gentle and cool and wet and i am almost nearly home.



and this is just the evening the part that comes after the day and the day is lovely too: already by noon too warm for spring it is summer arrived in april. the morning is spent fast packing things in suitcases and jess + i painting pictures of each other. late afternoon we go out for snocones + french fries. walking around arm in arm in a thin blue dress no socks back pack on everything summer perfect. like this is life in lawrence KANSAS if i had decided to stay: night after night of too sweet raspberry colada snocones and \$1 movies in the 9th + jowa street shopping center across from the only gas station in town that sells HERSHEY'S special dark. this is one of those moments that lets you know how all the other moments could be if you'd let them.



that all, all of that, that thousand days in one day, was no more than one month ago.

♥ ZINES to WRITE home about, really ♥

20 bus #7 2 stamps: kelli * pob 170612 * san francisco, ca * 94117 * who doesn't love public transportation & this zine is all true tales from the sf bus. funny heartwarming urban sort of love letters to mass transit & the city of dreams.

bottomfeeder #5 \$1 & 2 stamps/trade: carolee * box 8422 * columbus, oh * 43201 * it will break your heart, that sort of lovely. drawings of saints & the best of personal writing about getting married, obsessions with religious objects, tools, weights, old things, politeness, family relationships. carolee is one of my absolute favorite people her zine is one of my absolute favorite things so get out your stamps. daffodil #15 trade/\$1: emily * pob 124 * willington, ct * 06279 * for the past 4 years i have been asking you all to order this zine so if you haven't yet what are you waiting for as it has been my favorite since forever? and this issue is her best: handstamped words & images & colored inserts of paper & beautiful photocopied images & then oh best of all the writing: lyrical, honest & perfect. autobio but near fiction writing about holidays, relationships, zine making, snow, hockey, dreams. doris #10 \$1 & 2 stamps: cindy * pob 1734 * asheville, nc * 28802 * the story of her travels in siberia: love & norway & blue sky before it rains & army boys & train rides & kickball & international punk & absolute heartbreak & complete inspiration. type written & hand written & goofy drawings & the most direct the most real & loveliest straight-forward storytelling narrative. everyone i meet recently says doris is the most amazing zine & read it & you'll know it is true. limousine #6 \$2: libby * pob 14715 * san luis obispo, ca * 93406 * film zine meets very very well-written feminist perzine: barbara stanwyck, moving, tales of missed shows, fear, sweet honest but near fiction testaments to friends & family. the messy eater #5 \$1 & 2 stamps/ trade: elka * 148 via baja * ventura, ca * 93003 * tiny left handed zine with great scratchy dark drawings & terrifically honest & beautiful writing on summer, places, travel, school, fatness. hope #14 / you might as well live #7 \$2 to elissa nelson or lauren martin * bard college * annandale, ny * 12504 * a terrific split issue that is not so much split as shared. coming of age crush & love story fiction, articles on race, zines & activism, cute drawings, recipes, musings on the changing nature of home & travel, haiku. oh it is lovely you really need this zine that just radiates "i was made by two rad girls in love." plus it has a delicate pretty cover made out of that gold foil tissue like paper sold in chinatown. i think you burn it at temples. i am not sure. lovely.

aller liver écouter regarder adorer

prodigal sons, luxurious hotels, puritanical self-righteous co-workers, tulle skirts, auto-mat food fights, sheep dogs, stock market catastrophes, fictitious extra-marital affairs, & the sweetest love interest played by the extraordinarily good looking Ray Milland. allow yourself to be thoroughly charmed.

a history of reading alberto manguel (book)

read about reading in this book about books. cross-cultural, neurobiological, historical, poetical, theoretical, autobiographical, lyrical, educational, delightful.

6th & ave. B community garden (folk art) first, an overgrown garden of huge flowers & tall tall wild green things & a pavilion & a tiny house in the back for children to play in & vine covered trellises & benches obscured & a red haired woman suddenly appears out of the thick foliage enormous blossoms with an aluminum watering can. from the street you can hardly see any of the magic & then you go into the gate & it is a different world & you can hardly see any of the street. and then the best part of all: a handbuilt 40 foot tower of wood planks, carousel horses, chairs, dolls, stuffed animals, machinery, flags, discarded forgotten everything. installed & maintained since 1984 by one of the garden's founders, edward boros. simply my favorite place in NYC so far. come & visit come & see.



trans-continental holiday

the days of before leaving kansas my thought processes were like this: not too long ago it was winter and very cold and i felt always the compulsion to go somewhere else to be somewhere new, to always drive somewhere i had never been to before. but now that this place -- lawrence, kansas -- a place that was once new is now old and so old it is about to be my past, it is new again. i cannot look enough. on these last few days before i leave and abandon the structure of my life -- the store where i worked, the bars where i drank cocktails and had tiny intimate conversations that were so, so huge, or clubs where i watched bands play -- i want to be nowhere else. the fact of my leaving is already so definite. there will always be times to go new places: and they come soon and sooner. but these last few tangible days of a life 10 months in the making, well, all i want to do is sit outside the sidewalk cafe with a half read novel and my journal and iced tea, my shoulders feeling hot through my old cotton black lace dress and the smell of cigarettes and the sound of children singing loud near shouting out of turn just one block away maybe just out of sight.



so that was the end of april, trying so hard to fill up the days with space in lawrence, something tangible to remember. people leave towns all the time. people leave a town like

lawrence, a transient college town, every year. but the fact that i came here rootless knowing no one no idea really of what i would do besides write and make things and leave again, now there are all sorts of reasons to stay. that is, if i hadn't already too many reasons to go.

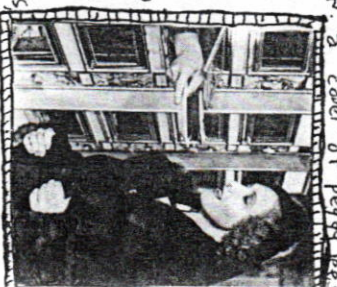


but before i left for real i left the first time, for a two week road trip to san francisco with stephanie. may first was the day we were supposed to leave and we thought it would be the day we would leave until 11:00 pm the night of april 30th: but i was so sick i could barely see straight and stephanie still had a paper to finish before she could graduate so we decided to leave may second. i had said good-bye to most everyone on thursday though so to be in town on friday, the day that was supposed to transport us from kansas to colorado, well, what could i do? it was the most alienating thing on earth, walking around drugged on antibiotics in a town i was already supposed to have left. i slept for most all of the day and then in a drugged stupor ran errands, and oh does every person i speak to the cashier at walgreens and the postal worker everyone do they not know that i am not supposed to be here, that i am already supposed to have left, that my time here has been used up? this is not my town at all, now, anymore, but how can a town only so briefly yours ever feel like it is where you belong.

now here i am in a tiny room in new york city thirteen floors from the ground traffic hums and screeches making it up into my cracked open window and i am trying to tell you about lawrence and my trip west afterward, to convince you and me both that these things are real, that it all happened as i will tell it as i have told it and will tell it again.

allen lives encounter regarding allen

garden of eden (folk art) a log cabin made out of stone, surrounded by life-size stone sculptures of adam, eve, Cain, Abel, labor crucified by preachers doctors lawyers bankers, the ballot unjustly kept from blacks women native americans children, all under the all powerful eye of god. this is 1914 prairie populism, carved by hand by a man in his 70s who fought in the civil war, fathered a child at age 81's now lies in his own backyard in a glass-topped coffin, beneath the protective surveillance of one of his own stone angels. follow signs from I-70 to licks, kansas
ghost world daniel claver (comic book) a boy drawn out in lawrence got mad at me since i like optic nerve so much but had never gotten into 8ball's, so finally in NYC i bought this paper bound book, oh, what i have missed, the complex friendship of two girls fresh out of high school, all smart dialogue no narration, great art! so refreshingly accurate with all the exact random details, events, intellectual yard sales, crazy neighbors, boys, half-assed harriet the spy sort of adventures, a pair of pants inexplicably abandoned on the sidewalk that make this book real real real, girls you knew, girls you were, lives you know by heart.
baggy ways / tech party machine girls (CD) the receptionists meet the raincoats, if the latter were just a bit quieter, relaxed, more prone to jingling pop. you say but then there's just the raincoats at all but listen to it, tell me if you don't know exactly what i mean, a cover of perfect fever, perhaps the perfect summer CD what with its 30 tracks of sun, sea.
eddy living (film) Jean Arthur (slowly) as the NYC working girl of our dreams who while riding on a double decker bus gets hit by a sabre coat dropped from above, life unfolds from there: rich bankers,



things like snuggling with my cat and cooking pad thai for my sister and having two and a half glasses of spanish red wine at her apartment on e. 80th street and taking the subway 70 blocks home half drunk quiet grinning like the most private of secrets.

la soeur et le chat et le vin



walking and walking traveling while walking like there is always somewhere even in your neighborhood a street you never took to get somewhere and then you walk that street and you find something absolutely magic like the community garden at avenue b and 6th or the tiny see hear store moved back to its old downstairs location that you forgot about or the greatest little vegan-ish cafe with cheap lunch specials or a spontaneous neighborhood tag sale or a fruit stand with really ripe good nectarines or the book you have been looking for used for ages sold on the street for \$2.

it is like as long as you are as busy as everyone else in new york the city is a great place to be. but you have to have plans and you have to be on your way to them, fast, and you have to not have time for anyone on the street that you don't know because they sure as hell don't have any time for you. that is, mostly. that is, that is how you feel that no one ever talks to anyone in new york and then the next thing you know a woman in the park asks you about italo calvino and a middle aged crusty punk propositions you, friendly-like, for sex. but when you have galleries to go to and lunch dates and friends visiting from out of town and ongoing projects and interviews and an internship and a movie to see and a band to watch well then the city is magic and full and exciting and alive alive alive.



we left may 2nd early in the morning both of us amazed that this was our life, this was something we were actually doing while everyone we knew went to work, took exams, stayed in town. amazing euphoria all the way through Kansas which was good because Kansas is Kansas straight through, flat and monotonous fields and sky not even golden wheat and blue expanse but instead, as it is so often, horizontal slabs of brown and grey. when you are about to leave all you can think about is the actual departure, the leaving: like you even forget about the getting there, the arrival. who would ever have thought that the mountains of Colorado could be stacked up right next to the plains of Kansas? but they are.

stephanie has a friend Carrie in Boulder so we went to stay with her. Boulder: it is like you need to be tan, play at least six sports, and shop at Abercrombie and Fitch to live there. a curious town that felt a million miles away from anywhere I could ever imagine wanting to live but oh, those mountains. like you think maybe you are in new canaan or darien connecticut and then you turn around and oh, those huge protective mountains right by the town. what it is it like to grow up under such mountains? do you always feel tiny and protected or do they completely fade into the backdrop of your life like so much sky in Kansas, like canopies of trees in connecticut?

the next day when we left Boulder we would drive and drive for absolute hours and get absolutely no where, the roads just wound tight like a corkscrew up and down and up the mountains around and around coiled small and close. hours and hours of driving and barely an inch on the map. approaching dark and we were supposed to camp this night so we got off the highway when we saw signs and looked for the campsite in a tiny town called mesa.

indicates campsite yes!



one. new York city is, initially, an unkind place, a city afraid of itself. people try too hard not to see each other on the street, to avoid eye contact, the brushing of a sleeve, any sort of suggestion of connection at all.

there are so many millions of people that no matter how many you know it feels like no one. during the day it is all right because there is the promise of daylight and of possibility: but at night, when the buildings loom tall and dark and private except for their isolated pockets of light, the windows with the venetian blinds pulled up and the contents of the apartments within totally exposed: rows of tiny lives one right after one right on top of another directly across from your window. you can see them all instantaneously like the cut-away side of a dollhouse: a brown armchair, a green leafy plant, a red carpet, a book shelf, a brown-haired woman reading, a black and white cat, the blue glow of a television screen, metallic picture frames, a piano keyboard, a yellow kitchen, a fight: a back taut with tension, arms outstretched, shaking, pleading, violent. what do you do with all this information of all these other lives that are supposed to mean nothing to your life.

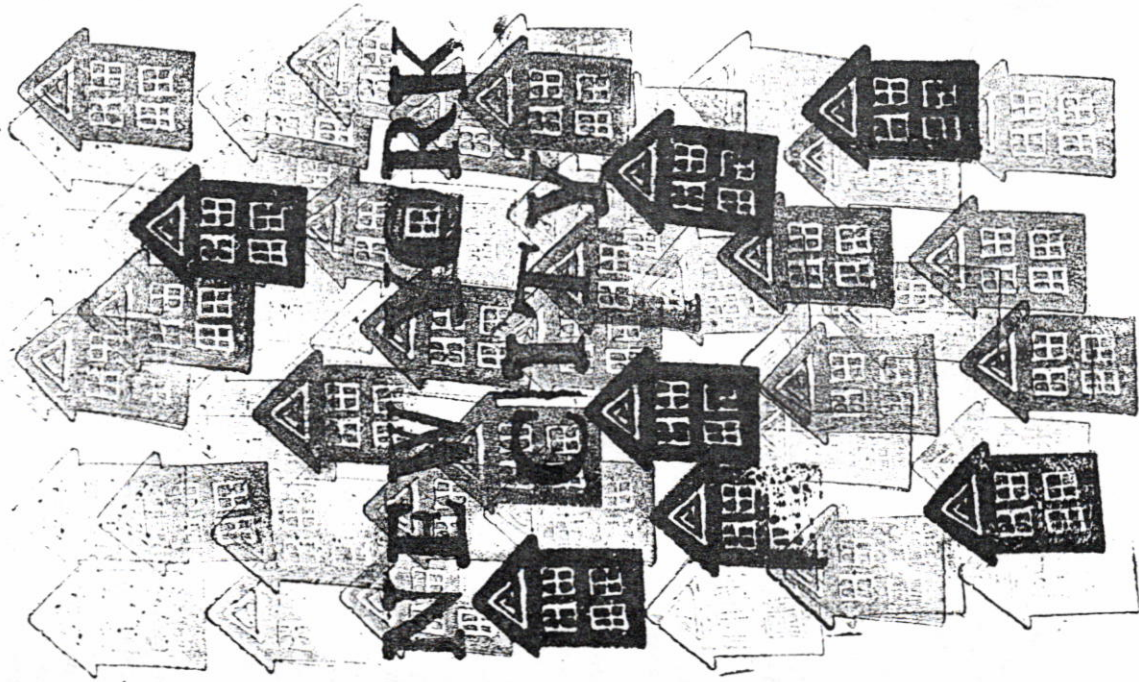
it is like i feel so so incredibly tiny compared to this multitude of involved developed lives all these possessions jobs and duties, but at the same time, way too large for my own skin, my insides swollen by the foul urban air and the lack of genuine and true companionship. i am going insane, hearing only my thoughts articulated in my mind, or on paper, or to a near stranger. it is only a matter of time when your own company becomes overbearing, too much of a presence.

two. but that, perhaps, is only new York city in the first couple of days, in the beginning. because the fact is new York city is a million hundred other things too and none of them are sad or lonely at all.

too much time has passed. i can't tell this to you like i would like to. i can't make you see what i saw and it is like i was so integrated in those exact moments in being in all those places all at once immediately just amazed just looking so hard it is like i used it all up: i can't see any of it anymore. i don't want to tell you just everything we did and saw i don't want to do that at all: i just want you to think about travel, trips you yourself have taken or want to take, of all trips everywhere and always trips both that have occurred and that are waiting, coiled with kinetic energy, ready to unfurl. i already know what i have seen and done. always i will know more than i can tell.



but i do want to tell you about mesa, because we never found the campsite. we drove through the town twice and up near to the mountain - the ground glowing white with snow as the saucer - down shaped sky darkened, the earth this huge open dark basin expanse before the mountain. and then back down again into town, no campsite signs anywhere, and so we parked at the only place with lights on, a motel bar and lounge. a middle aged woman dressed in a pink sleeveless shell despite the cold answered the door as we tentatively opened it, saying the restaurant is closed but you can go around back to the lounge. and we said oh we just want to know where the nearest campsite is do you know where it is the map says-- and then an older man rough bristled dressed warm comes up behind her and says the campsite is on the mountain. it's covered with ice. you don't want to go up there. but you can camp here. and the woman turns to him saying nothing but he answers her look with it's not like we're going to get in trouble.



so that was that: our first night of camping, behind the motel's gravel parking lot, next to a corral with a skittish white horse and the mountain to our backs. it was cold cold cold and the pink lighter we had bought earlier at a gas station didn't work and the wind kept on blowing out our propane stove and after boiling our doughy pasta and kale and eating it cold already immediately after it was cooked we went into the lounge for hot tea.

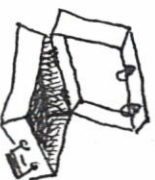
it is like i don't think of any of these things anymore. here they are i'm trying so hard to record them all in the computer so i don't forget them because here in new york i haven't been thinking about them at all, the overheard family fight (but mom, she's incorrigible!) in the women's bathroom in a gas station in the corner of nevada when i dropped a contact and panicked but then found it, spotted the slight shine on the dirty tiny tile floor. there are things like that and things like casinos in every rest stop in nevada nevada nevada is like that, and this whole trip while sure i suppose things happened one right after another we traveled in a linear fashion from town to town now in retrospect time is not organized that way at all. all these places fit into the same space the same time the same trip and the same set of feelings and everything. there is nothing like that constant inertia of one place right after another place, and all these places being previously unseen, new to you. and sure maybe i have done this sort of travel before, but it has always been alone and not with someone by my side for two weeks whom i completely adore and still completely adore and now she is so far away, so completely half a continent away.



orderly and unique houses. the sudden congestion of space first had me reeling, like it felt you could just sweep all the little houses off with your arm and there would be the hills green and lush again underneath. like everything, the whole city, is just on the surface of the land. but then when you are actually in the city there is nothing to do but be there and be in love. stephanie and zabet and i, we were all so radiantly happy.

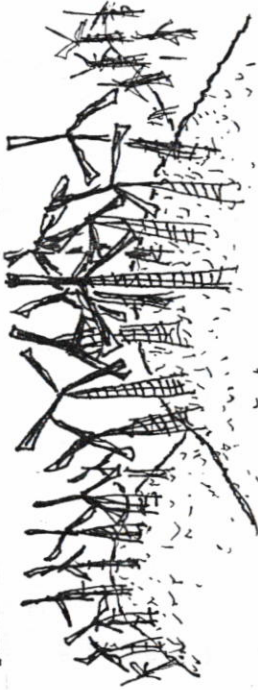
now i am as far away as geographically possible within the continental united states from san francisco and half that from the person who shared this trip with me. then too yes there was the trip back east, two days after i got back from california. minneapolis at jon's to chicago at sung's to columbus at carolee's to home in connecticut, and then a week later the move to new york city, where i am now on a rainy pervasively damp sunday afternoon. but that trip back was a private sort of trip, crazy and eventful and absolutely great, despite the nerve wracking-ness that accompanies traveling with the sweetest cat in the world who hates driving in cities hates his carrier even more but will tolerate highways, sleeping in a ball poised between my right shoulder, my yellow raincoat, and a suitcase.

already then yes kansas feels forever away and the two times leaving with catherine seeing me off the second time seems months and months ago and now with my car parked in connecticut i do all my traveling while walking, the millions of things to see in one city in this city in this east village neighborhood, or via subway to anywhere else. your life goes on that way unpacks itself and sets up its structures wherever you go; no matter how long you stay, or how ~~soon~~ you leave.



the end

my family is very new england and my friend abby said why i didn't think you'd like california so much but oh the fact is i do. when we first crossed the state border from nevada we were greeted by these big soft rolling hills with their crests covered with fragile skeletal windmills all turning independently at different speeds, start stop start, the most lovely delicate structures stacked together, a forest of the strangest silhouettes, like an image in a bergman film. sure parts of california are flat and ugly like ohio or



kansas but then there is priest valley, two or three hours southish of san francisco: lush wet green hill after green hill rolling and rolling and the roads twist up and down and in-between them as clouds roll low in and out and suddenly around another turn nestled between hills is a field of absolutely yellow yellow flowers like a positive citron color you don't expect to find outside of an expensive clothing catalogue. oh it is total and complete fairy-tale land like what i imagine parts of ireland to look like. how many times can you say oh my god oh my god before you are just stunned silent. it was like that, priest valley was. and that was just a serendipitous detour to get off the monotonous highway. that was just what you find when you aren't looking for anything in particular, you just know that you are not totally pleased with where you are.

from priest valley to san francisco in one day: it is like for miles you see these green green rolling hills and then all of a sudden they are cluttered with these rows and rows of adorable

it was the one trip but how many different trips exist inside of that one? i cannot imagine how stephanie thinks of what she has seen. what are the stories she tells, and what does she remember first, and how does she recall those red rock alien forms in that corner of arizona by nevada? i was the driver, she was the navigator, so all along unfolded on her thighs she had the map the two dimension pictorial representation of the route i was physically driving. the concepts of space and geography and the relationships between places and city to city state to state are different for her than for me. and then there are things too like her old eye wound re-opening and hurting from when her totally completely insane cat scratched it a couple of years ago, and for quite a while in colorado and part of utah she was barely able to open her eyes to look at anything.

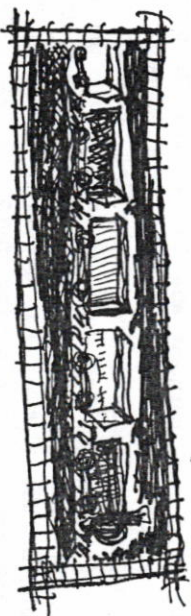
these perhaps are stories that stephanie would tell that perhaps she is telling in some room somewhere in lawrence right now: adventures resulting from her amazing unflinching ability to attract unusual older men, including the drunk colorado mountain man in mesa, the stoned ex-hippie at the sfmoma, the german businessman at the covered wagon. what else might she tell? that at this club the covered wagon, on thursday nights there are large and lovely dancing ladies and my friend, whom i just randomly ran into, introduced us to them all as they gyrated above the pool table and the bar.



maybe stephanie talks about getting hot water from gas stations for dehydrated soup and potato flakes, or maybe she talks about the grand canyon, how it costs \$20 just to get in and it is like there are two grand canyons, the bank post

office snack bar campsite souvenir shop book store ice cream stand motel lounge mule corral electric tram grand canyon, and the canyon itself, a blue and purple and maroon rock palace inverted into the ground. i imagine that she would then say how she prefers arches national park in utah, with its strange terrain of sage brush and huge twisted bizarre rock forms that look like lions rabbits and faces and standing figures out of the corner of your eye and that almost seem to move, to shift somehow, when you turn directly to look at them.

maybe she talks about wichita, about staying with my friends sara and paul, drinking beer and hard cider on the big charming porch before going to sleep and waking up at 6 am to the most terrific terrible torrential kansas thunderstorm and when we turned on the radio to hear what we imagined would be a twister warning we found out that frank sinatra had died.



maybe she talks about the two nights we slept in the car by the railroad tracks, how her knee and my hip would hurt and how i had a thousand adrenaline fueled nocturnal hallucinations that, every time i heard an urgent train whistle it meant that somehow we were parked on the tracks and we were about to die. maybe she mentions the scariest driving incident in the world in arizona when a car was going the wrong way in the left lane on the highway at 90 mph and how afterward i was so traumatized that no matter what sort of highway we were on i would occasionally panic when i saw an oncoming car, momentarily convinced that the driver was delusional and crazy.

the magnetic fields are near perfect anywhere so perhaps that doesn't count. palace is great for boring parts of california and dead can dance is absolutely necessary for priest valley but once you approach san francisco modest mouse is all about that sort of anticipation and excitement. karate is good for the red open expanses of new mexico but once you approach towns like taos and the forest after it you want some sort of mix with brihan eno on it. i will associate the modern lovers always with those amazing lovely national forests right outside of flagstaff arizona, which is itself a charming charming town that perhaps i would have liked even more if i hadn't seen it on the way back, after i had seen san francisco. because the fact is after seeing san francisco, for both stephanie and me, every other town is a disappointment. or not so much of a disappointment, but just imperfect because yes we too are in love with the city by the bay.

Oh to the city of dreams

san francisco: all hills and charming rows of tidy old buildings and everyone's so nice and the weather cool and the absolute best of company, the wonderful zabet, just walking in the morning to get chai tea oh like nothing could ever be commonplace in that town where everything is new yet comfortably familiar: like as my friend jesse wrote to me on a postcard from sf only one month before my own trip: it's not like being in a strange place. it isn't. you feel like someone passing through but at the same time you feel like you could live there like maybe you already live there, and everyone talks to you, people on the street and bar tenders and and cute boys meet your eye and smile at you on the street and all the terrific restaurants and the modern art museum and all the different districts and the most amazing enormous burritos in the mission for \$2.98: whole beans and rice and fresh cilantro and half a fresh avocado and tomatoes and lettuce and homemade salsa and quacamole and free chips too.

definitely she must say something about las vegas, about how insane it was, about how we walked at night from downtown to the absolute end of the strip, 4 or 5 miles, wearing platform sandals in the rain. how first we went thrift shopping so later we could say things like oh you like this skirt? thank you. i bought it for \$2 in las vegas. and how as far as casinos go we both liked caesar's palace best because no matter how crazy and unique the exterior so many of the other casinos were the exact same on the inside: just dark with rows of shiny machines and 45 year old cocktail waitresses and plump elderly women with souvenir plastic buckets of coins. maybe stephanie then says something we said to each other often that night, i just do not understand how anyone could want to spend more than one night in las vegas. surely to someone sometime stephanie mentions that she hates needles, california and their crappy terribly expensive "vegetarian burritos."

together we saw and did all these things and now, singularly, we remember them. the thing is of course these aren't stephanie's memories of the things she has seen. they are mine, my impressions superimposed on her presence.



then there are also absolutely shared things, like the trip's soundtrack, the tapes we listened to in the car. bands like the secret stars or madison electric, they are perfect for tiny apartments in cities but for the swelling hugeness of the colorado mountains you need huge huge sounds like neutral milk hotel, surging up and swallowing the hollows in your chest when you see another sheer straight drop beneath you on the other side of the guard rail. old old i.e.m. is perfect for utah, as are the magnetic fields, but

Dear Iris -

WW98 © Photo: Fred Linden.

The other night I climbed to the top of the hill that I'm staying on - to this park, and stared out into a view like this one, and I thought about you. I think you would really love it here - have you ever been? It seems like around every turn there's some new view that knocks you over. I feel really comfortable here - it's not like being in a strange place.

Fresh Pacific Ocean air and the morning sun make for another beautiful day in the Castro and Noe Valley neighborhoods of San Francisco. In the distance the Financial District, the Bay Bridge and the East Bay Hills can be seen.

Keep in touch - Jesse

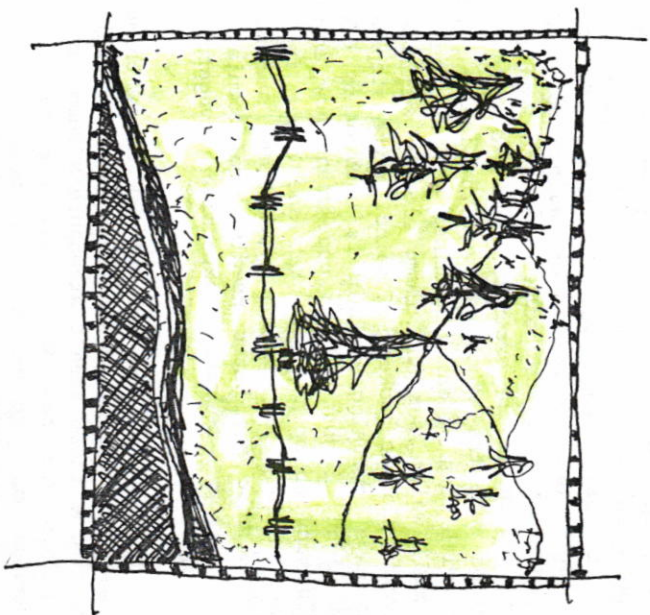
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"Have a ..."

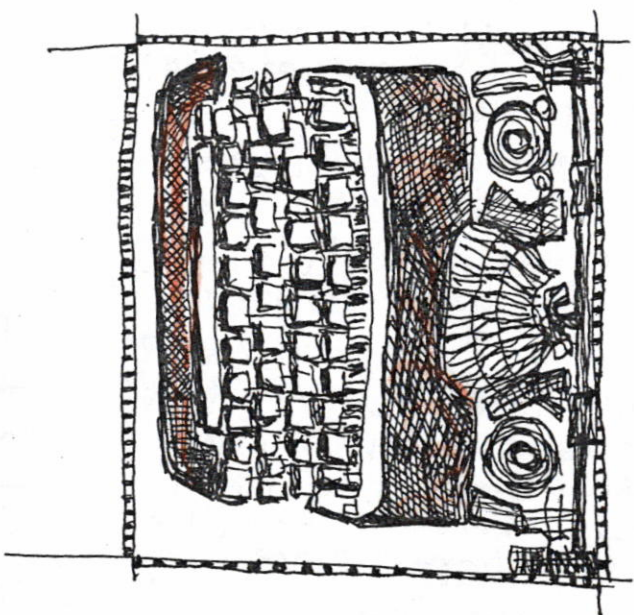


Emily K. Larned
2124 Kentucky
Lawrence, KS
66046

the postcard from jesse



there is the
living



and the
recording